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The 1930s Repatriation of Mexican and Mexican-Americans may Have Similar Consequences with the New Donald Trump Administration

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The 1930s Repatriation of Mexican and Mexican-Americans may Have Similar Consequences with the New Donald Trump Administration

In the early 1930s, government officials from the local, state and federal level of the United States deported up to half a million Mexican and Mexican-Americans. How did government officials justify these repatriations? Beginning with the onset of the Great Depression, these deportations were designed to provide employment to out-of-work whites and to free up resources being spent on unemployed people of Mexican descent. Some of the deportees were Mexican citizens, and others were American citizens of Mexican heritage. Regardless of citizenship, many *repatriados* experienced similar adversities in the forced journey to Mexico and trying to integrate into the Mexican culture. This paper will examine the government processes involved in the deportations by reviewing official documents from the local, state, and federal levels. This paper will also explore the impact on individual *repatriados* and their families, as found in memoirs, oral histories and photographs. The arguments of civic, state, and federal authorities for repatriation were based on economic issues, such as employment and welfare costs; in fact, the main reasons behind these deportations were racism and nativism. Understanding the justifications for and the impact of these deportations is critical to evaluate current proposals for immigration policies, some of which include mass deportations. The current immigration proposals from the new Donald Trump administration have parallel attitudes as those from the Herbert Hoover administration that repatriated Mexican and Mexican-Americans in the early 1930s.